

Application Serial No. 09/769,672  
Amendment dated December 4, 2003  
Reply to Office Action dated October 22, 2003

### REMARKS

This Amendment, filed by facsimile, is identical to the Amendment filed on December 3, 2003 by mail.

Claims 21-40 are pending. No claims have been allowed.

The undersigned respectfully thanks the Examiner for the courtesies extended during a telephone interview on December 3, 2003, in which the claim objections and claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112 set forth in the Office Action dated October 22, 2003 were discussed.

Responsive to the rejection of Claims 21-40 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, Applicants have amended Claim 21 to recite that the refining step is conducted at a temperature of at least 1800°C. Support for the foregoing may be found in the present specification at page 5, second full paragraph, which states that "[t]he temperature of the refining crucible 3 is between 1800 and 2400°C" and that "[w]hat is important is that the melt at some point or other on its way from the melting tank 1 to the platinum crucible 5 [i.e., while in the refining stage] was heated to the temperature range mentioned, from 1800 to 2400°C or more".

Responsive to the objection to Claims 28 and 29, Applicants have amended Claims 22 and 23, from which Claims 28 and 29 depend, respectively, to recite only a melting temperature. Therefore, Claims 28 and 29, which recite a refining temperature, properly depend from Claims 22 and 23 and further limit the scope thereof.

Responsive to the rejection of Claims 22-40 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, Applicants have amended Claims 22-27 to depend from Claim 21.

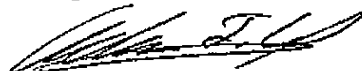
It is believed that the above represents a complete response to the Official Action and reconsideration is requested. Specifically, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance and respectfully request allowance thereof.

In the event Applicants have overlooked the need for an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicants hereby petition therefor and authorize that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 02-0385, Baker & Daniels.

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Should the Examiner have any further questions regarding any of the foregoing, he is respectfully invited to telephone the undersigned at (260) 424-8000.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATION OF MAILING

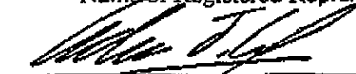
I hereby certify that this correspondence is being submitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office via facsimile on the date indicated below:

December 4, 2003

Date

ADAM F. COX, REG. NO. 46,644

Name of Registered Representative



Signature